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Mr. JOHNSON'S
LETTER

TO

Mr. Chandler.

A
LETTER

TO

Mr. CHANDLER,

IN

Vindication of a Passage

In the Lord

BISHOP of LONDON's

Second Pastoral Letter.

By THO. JOHNSON, M. A.
Fellow of Magdalen-College in CAMBRIDGE.

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A
LETTER
 TO
Mr. CHANDLER.

S I R,



S your Zeal and Warmth for
 what you are pleased to call the
Cause of Christian Liberty (which,
 in plainer *English*, is universal
 Latitude and Comprehension)
 have excited your Endeavours
 to bring in an eminent Prelate of our Church,
 as agreeing with, or favouring your Notions;
 I shall make no other Apology for the Trouble
 I here give you, than my Desire of rescuing the
 Sentiments of that excellent Person from an in-
 jurious Representation; not without some hopes
 of

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Letter, of *convincing* you (of what you declare was not
 p. 5. your *Intention*) that you *have both mistaken his Lordship's Meaning, and drawn inconclusive Inferences from it.* It could certainly be no crime to oppose his Lordship's Judgment to one of his Presbyters, provided there were just ground for such *Opposition.* But great Care should have been taken not to misrepresent his Lordship. You should have been sure, that you were under the Influence of no Passion or Prejudice, which might byas your Judgment, and incline you to think him more favourable to your Sentiments, than there was real Foundation for: You should not only have been *abundantly persuaded,* but have evidently and clearly perceived, that your *Conclusions were just and good;* and then there could have been no danger of mistaking. A particular Sentence might seem to favour your Opinion at first sight, which upon a more thorough View would appear quite otherwise; or an ambiguity of Phrase might leave room for your Interpretation, when the thread of the Discourse, the particular Design in view, and the course of the Argument, might determine the meaning to be directly the reverse. This is what should have been well weigh'd and consider'd; and if it had, might have saved your self and me the Trouble of this Letter.

p. 13. *His Lordship's Doctrine, you say, stands thus; That the several Denominations of Christians agree in the Substance, i. e. all the necessary Articles of Christianity, and in the necessary Enforcements of the Practice of it.* This is the

p. 36, &c. Opinion you would fix upon his Lordship, with a long Train of Consequences of half a dozen Pages, every one of which is entirely subversive of all legal Establishments of Christianity, as
 well

well as of all Church-Communion: Which, therefore, you could not with any shew of Probability, or even with tolerable Decency impute to a Person of his Lordship's Station and Character. Nor can you yourself believe, that those are really his Lordship's Sentiments, even while you are charging him with them, as you must know (what his Lordship has eminently shewn both in his Writings and Actions) his firm and inviolable Attachment to our civil and religious Establishment. With what Truth then can you conclude, that *in his Lordship's Judgment, none of the several Denominations of Christians can be Hereticks; that, his Lordship cannot be for rejecting any of the Denominations of Christians out of the Church of Christ, or excluding them the Church of England, or think Subscriptions necessary to preserve Uniformity in the Faith, or appear at all concern'd to promote such an Uniformity, but, on the contrary, to allow Variety of Opinions?* These are Notions which, tho' You may think proper to appear in Defence of, yet can make no Impression, when fix'd on his Lordship; every day of whose Life is an effectual Confutation of them; and, in whose Writings there is not the least Hint or Footstep of them, but the direct contrary*. But these, you'll say,
are

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* It may not be improper in this Place to cite a Passage from his Lordship's *Concio ad Synodum, de Excommunicatione*, published in the Year 1715.
 " Pravitatem Doctrinæ sive Dogmata Fidei Christi-
 " tianæ adversa excommunicationem mereri inde
 " constat; quod cum Ecclesia Christiana sit socie-
 " tas, quæ membra nisi præ-eunte Fidei Professione
 " non recipit; si quis hac conditione admissus a
 " Fide illa publice discesserit, adeoq; Professionem
 " quasi

are necessary Consequences of the general Position laid down above, and you only charge them as such. If so, and they be allow'd (as they must be) to be inconsistent with his Lordship's known Principles, should not you have concluded from hence, that his Lordship could not mean, what you impute to him, in the Sentence under Debate, tho' the words might seem to look that way? Had there been an inaccurate or unguarded Expression (as is sometimes the case of the best Writers, when they are intent upon another Point) yet would not every candid Reader have interpreted it consistently with the Bishop's avow'd Principles, so as not to injure the main Argument in view? But I have no occasion to bespeak your Candour in this particular; as I hope to make it appear before I take my leave, that his Lordship's Sentiments and Expression

“ quasi revocaverit, ipse se e numero Christianorum
 “ subtrahere videatur, a Christiana Societate (si se
 “ ultro non subtrahat) jure merito separandus. —
 “ In eandem sententiam a divo Johanne memora-
 “ bile illud accepimus præceptum; *Omnis qui re-*
 “ *cedit & non permanet in Doctrina Christi, Deum non*
 “ *habet; qui permanet in Doctrina, hic Patrem &*
 “ *Filium habet: Si quis venit ad vos & hanc Doctri-*
 “ *nam non affert, nolite eum recipere in domum, nec,*
 “ *Ave, ei dixeritis; qui enim dicit illi, Ave, com-*
 “ *municat operibus ejus malignis. Idem scilicet Jo-*
 “ *hannes Apostolus, qui Irenæo referente Cerinthum*
 “ *Divinitatis Christi oppugnatorem in Balneo re-*
 “ *periens ex eo statim profilivit.*” From whence, I
 suppose, 'tis clear, that his Lordship did not sup-
 pose that all who profess'd Christianity were to
 be received into Communion, if they held *Dogmata*
Christiana Fidei adversa, Tenets contrary to the
 Christian Faith; intimating at the close of the Pa-
 ragraph, that such a one was *Cerintus, an Oppugner*
of Christ's Divinity.

are entirely consistent with one another, and with Truth ; tho' by no means favourable to your *Plan for the Union of all Christians*.

To prevent Mistakes, and give the Reader the fuller and more distinct View of his Lordship's Sentiments, I shall put down the whole Paragraph at large ; for a Reason you will afterwards see, beginning a little higher, and carrying it down a little lower, than as it stands in your Letter to his Lordship.

Second Pastoral Letter, p. 24, 25, 26.

“ By attending to the Matters wherein the
 “ Philosophers differ'd, we see clearly that they
 “ were Points which concern'd the very *Being* of
 “ Religion and Virtue ; and that those Differen-
 “ ces render'd the Motives and Obligations to
 “ both, precarious and uncertain. And this
 “ shews how unjust the Objection is, which In-
 “ fidels raise upon this Head, from the differ-
 “ ent Opinions among Christians, and the sever-
 “ ral Sects and Denominations form'd upon those
 “ Differences. As long as Men are Men, and
 “ have different degrees of Understanding, and
 “ every one a Partiality to his own Conceptions ;
 “ it is not to be expected, that they should agree
 “ in any one entire Scheme and every Part of it,
 “ in the Circumstances as well as the Substance,
 “ in the Manner of Things as well as in the
 “ Things themselves. The Question therefore
 “ is not in general about a Difference in Opini-
 “ on, which in our present State is unavoidable,
 “ but about the Weight and Importance of the
 “ Things wherein Christians differ, and the
 “ Things wherein they agree. And it will ap-
 “ pear, that the several Denominations of Chri-
 “ tians agree both in the Substance of Religion,
 “ and

“ and in the necessary Enforcements of the Pra-
 “ ctice of it : *That* the World and all Things in
 “ it were created by God, and are under the
 “ Direction and Government of his all-powerful
 “ Hand and all-seeing Eye : *That* there is an
 “ essential Difference between Good and Evil,
 “ Virtue and Vice ; *That* there will be a State
 “ of future Rewards and Punishments according
 “ to our Behaviour in this Life ; *That* Christ
 “ was a Teacher sent from God, and that his
 “ Apostles were divinely inspir’d ; *That* all Chri-
 “ stians are bound to *declare* and *profess* them-
 “ selves to be his Disciples ; *That* not only the
 “ Exercise of the several Virtues, but also a Be-
 “ lief in Christ, is necessary in order to their
 “ obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of
 “ God, and Eternal Life ; *That* the Worship
 “ of God is to be perform’d chiefly by the Heart,
 “ in Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings ; and
 “ as to all other Points, *That* they are bound
 “ to live by the Rules which Christ and his Apo-
 “ stles have left them in the Holy Scriptures.
 “ Here then is a fix’d, certain, and uniform
 “ Rule of Faith and Practice, containing all the
 “ most necessary Points of Religion, establish’d
 “ by a divine Sanction, embrac’d as such by all
 “ Denominations of Christians, and in itself a-
 “ bundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge
 “ and Practice of Religion in the World. As
 “ to Points of greater Intricacy, and which re-
 “ quire uncommon Degrees of Penetration and
 “ Knowledge ; such indeed have been Subjects
 “ of Dispute among Persons of *Study* and *Learn-*
 “ *ing* in the several Ages of the Christian Church ;
 “ but the *People* are not obliged to enter into
 “ them, so long as they do not touch the *Found-*
 “ *ations* of Christianity, nor have an Influence
 “ upon

“ upon *Practice*. In other Points, it is suffi-
 “ ent that they believe the Doctrines, so far as
 “ they find, upon due Enquiry and Examination
 “ according to their several Abilities and Op-
 “ portunities, that God has reveal’d them. Now
 “ this is a State of Things very different from
 “ that of the Heathen World ; in which their
 “ Teachers differ’d about the most important
 “ Points in Religion : And while no one could
 “ claim an Authority from God, nor any Right
 “ to require an Assent to his Doctrines ; the
 “ Generality of People had no certain Test to
 “ try them by, nor by Consequence any Means
 “ to deliver themselves out of a Maze of endless
 “ Doubt and Uncertainty. Which is well ex- Laet. l. 3.
 “ press’d by an antient Writer, in Answer to c. 27.
 “ the Question, Did the Philosophers then teach
 “ nothing that was right ? Yes, says he, *many*
 “ *Things ; but their Precepts have no Weight,*
 “ *because they are human, and want a divine*
 “ *Sanction.* They are not believ’d, because *he*
 “ *who hears, thinks himself a Man, as well as*
 “ *he who teaches.*”

That we may understand rightly the force and
 meaning of these Passages, it will be necessary
 to consider the Argument the Bishop was upon,
 and the Objection he was answering. His Lord-
 ship had urg’d against the antient *Philosophers*, Past. Let.
 That “ the Differences among them in Points p. 20.
 “ of the greatest Weight and Moment, were
 “ endless and irreconcilable. ----- While some
 “ asserted the Being of a God, others openly
 “ denied it ; while some were willing to be-
 “ lieve, that the Soul was immortal, and that
 “ they should live in a future State, others
 “ affirm’d it to be mortal ; while some affirm’d
 “ that

“ that Virtue and Vice were eternal and un-
 “ changeable, it was the Doctrine of others, that
 “ nothing was good or evil, just or unjust, &c.”
 With several other Opinions, enumerated by
 his Lordship, which concern’d the very *Being* of
 Religion and Virtue, and render’d the Motives
 and Obligations to both, precarious and un-
 certain. “ And this shews the great Advantage
 “ of a Divine Revelation as well to ascertain our
 “ Duty, as to engage our Attention and Re-
 “ gard to it ; to give all Men, great and small,
 “ learned and unlearned, a sure Rule and a
 “ clear View of all they are to do, and effectually
 “ to engage them in a steady and uniform
 “ Pursuit of the great End, that such a Reve-
 “ lation proposes.” To this it has been some-
 times objected by Infidels, That the Christian
 Revelation has not answer’d this End ; that we
 are no better agreed about religious Points than
 the antient *Pagans* were, which they infer from
 the different Opinions among Christians, and
 the several Sects and Denominations form’d up-
 on those Opinions. Upon which his Lordship
 observes, “ That the Question is not in general
 “ about a Difference of Opinion (which, in our
 “ present State, is unavoidable) but about the
 “ Weight and Importance of the Things where-
 “ in Christians differ, and the Things wherein
 “ they agree.” The *Pagan* Philosophers (as
 has been observed) differ’d about the most ne-
 cessary Points, Things that concern’d the very
 Being of Religion, as the Existence of God, a
 future State, the essential Difference between
 Virtue and Vice, and the like. Now, will it
 not be a strong Argument in favour of Christia-
 nity, that its Professors do not differ about those
 most necessary Points, about the Being of a
 God,

God, a future State, &c. ? Will it not be an effectual Answer to the Objection which Infidels raise upon this Head from the different Opinions among Christians, that they are agreed about those most essential Points of Religion, which the Philosophers were not ? And was not this the Objection his Lordship undertook to answer ? Please, Sir, to consider the Differences of the Philosophers on the one hand, and the Agreement of Christians on the other, and you will see, that they stand in full Opposition.

The Philosophers
differ'd,

I. About the Being of God, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, &c. Things which concern the very *Being* of Religion and Virtue.

II. About a State of future Rewards and Punishments according to our Behaviour in this Life, the *necessary Enforcement* of the Practice of Religion and Virtue.

Christians are
agreed,

I. About the Being of God, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, &c. Things which concern the very *Being* of Religion and Virtue.

II. About a State of future Rewards and Punishments according to our Behaviour in this Life, the *necessary Enforcement* of the Practice of Religion and Virtue.

T H E R E F O R E,

Christianity greatly excels the antient Philosophy in ascertaining our Duty, in affording us such a *fix'd, certain and uniform Rule of Faith and Practice*, as to leave no room for Dispute about what concerns the very *Being* of Religion and Virtue, and the *necessary Enforcements* of the Practice of them, concerning which all the se-

veral Denominations of *Christians* are in fact agreed.

Letter, Thus, Sir, I have furnish'd you with an Answer to the Query which you left *unanswer'd*, *because you could not possibly devise an Answer to it upon the Scheme* of your learned Adversary. And yet I have offer'd nothing but what seems to be the just Answer to the Objection of Infidels, nothing but what is perfectly agreeable to his Lordship's Answer, and Dr. Berriman's Explication of it.

I know you have endeavour'd to give a different Turn to his Lordship's Argument, in order to deduce from it Latitudinarian Consequences, which his Lordship abhors. And I own you have, by a little Slight of Hand and a dexterous shifting of Words to another meaning than was intended, given a plausible Appearance to your Representation of his Lordship's Sentiments. But whether this were the Effect of a sincere Intention to represent him truly, or of a strong Inclination to make him speak what suited your own Hypothesis, I don't pretend to determine. However 'tis plain, that his Lordship's Argument wanted no more than I have said, which is a reasonable Presumption that he intended no more. If there is any Ambiguity in the Words, the Point in hand should determine the Sense of them. I proceed therefore to consider his Lordship's Words, and your Interpretation of them.

Past.Let. I. His Lordship says, That *the several Denominations of Christians agree in the SUB-*
 P. 24. *STANCE OF RELIGION*, which is put in opposition to what he had said above, That *the Philosophers differ'd in Points which concern'd the very BEING OF RELIGION*. In which two Passages

Passages 'tis plain, that the SUBSTANCE of Religion, and the BEING of Religion mean the same thing. By the SUBSTANCE of Religion you would have the Bishop understand *all the necessary Articles of Christianity* : So here, instead of Religion, you would slip upon us *Christianity*. But why so? Are the Terms synonimous, or is not the former a much more general Expression than the latter? How then shall we come at its determinate Sense, but by considering the Argument in hand, or the principal Point to be proved? Now the Design of his Lordship was plainly this; to shew that there were not those Differences among Christians that there had been among the Pagan Philosophers, Differences about *the Substance, the very Being of Religion*. What Religion? What, but that which is so in the most general Sense of the Term, such as is applicable both to Deists and Christians. There are some things, which must suit the Idea of Religion in the abstract, or general Sense; which give the Name, Nature, and Essence to Religion, or which are necessary to it, *as Religion*. In those Particulars all Religions must agree, as there are other things, which distinguish the several Kinds of Religion. Now 'tis evident as well from his Lordship's express Words, as from the Design of his Argument, that he is here speaking of Religion in its abstract Nature; he is speaking of what relates to Religion *as such*, of what concerns the *very Being and Substance* of it, or determines its Name, Nature, and Essence; as the Existence of a God and a Providence, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, the Belief of a future State of Rewards and Punishments. Without these there can properly be no such thing as

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Religion. They are what some of the antient Pagans disputed or denied, and what all Christians, of whatsoever Sect or Denomination, are fully agreed about, however they may differ about other Articles, which concern them *as Christians*; Articles that may be more or less necessary, as they more or less affect the Vitals of Christianity, are of greater or lesser Importance. Our Religion comprehends under it all that was good in Paganism, and a great deal more; and there are several Views in which its superior Excellency might be shewn, as being more clear and determinate, more pure and holy, more perfect and adequate to our Duty. But that which it was to the Bishop's Purpose to consider in the Argument he was upon, was its Clearness and Determinateness with respect to those prime Verities, those fundamental Principles of all Religion, which were Matter of eternal Dispute among the Philosophers, for want of a proper Authority to determine among so many different and contradictory Opinions; and which Christianity had so far put beyond all Question, that no Christians of whatsoever Sect or Denomination ever differed about them. This is what, upon a careful Perusal of his Lordship's admirable Defence of Christianity, seems to me to be his Design in the Passage under Debate; and I own, I am not a little surpriz'd, that a Person of your Acumen should mistake him; mistake both his Argument and Expression, and then make a solemn *Appeal to his Lordship's Honour and Conscience for a Decision* of what is as clear as the Day. When the judicious Dr. Berriman had observ'd to you, that his Lordship spoke of *Religion only in a general View and in Opposition to Philosophy*, you give

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give the Alarm of *Confusion and Absurdity*: And where do they lie but in this? *All Denominations of Christians embrace a Rule of Faith and Practice, establish'd by a divine Sanction, which is in itself abundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of Religion in general in the World, in Opposition to Philosophy; tho' there is something farther necessary to the fuller Direction of our Knowledge and Practice in particular, or to the particular Support of Christianity as such.* Or thus; *God hath establish'd a Rule of Faith for Christians to keep up Religion in general, without keeping up to Christianity in particular.* Now, Sir, supposing this to be the Case, where lies the Absurdity? Is it absurd to say, that there is a real Benefit convey'd to Mankind by the Christian Institution, in settling beyond dispute the fundamental Principles of *Natural Religion*, though *by accident* Christians are not so fully agreed about some of those which are peculiar to *Christianity*? Or rather, Is not this the very thing which should be said, as a proper Answer to the Objection which his Lordship was considering? But perhaps you may imagine, the Absurdity lies here; that the Christian Revelation is *sufficiently clear* to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of *Religion in general* in the World, and yet not *sufficiently clear* for the particular Support of *Christianity*. And if this be your Meaning, I answer;

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1. That this is an Objection of another kind than what his Lordship was considering; and he could have no Reason to account for the Differences among Christians, whether about Fundamentals or Non-fundamentals. It was a sufficient

ficient Answer to the Infidel-Objection to say, that Christians of all Denominations were agreed about those essential Points of Religion, concerning which the Philosophers differ'd.

2. That there is no Absurdity in supposing, that all reveal'd Doctrines are not *equally clear*, any more than that they are not all *equally necessary*. Why may not those of primary Consideration and Importance be clear in the first Degree, those that are in the next order of Importance clear in the next Degree ; and so of the rest ?

3. That there is nothing in the Christian Revelation of Importance to us but what is *sufficiently clear*, clear enough to be rightly understood by unprejudiced Minds, and right Dispositions ; who come prepared with all proper previous Learning, and make use of all the necessary helps for Information. Some Persons may have Talents, which others want ; and no doubt but those of greater Abilities and Opportunities will be capable of a more perfect Knowledge of the several Articles of their Religion. But then nothing will be requir'd of any, more than he has Talents for. And there are none but what have at least one Talent : None, but what with proper Care and Diligence may have Abilities to understand rightly as much as is absolutely necessary for their Salvation ; which is as plain, as that God has given us such Faculties, as will not necessarily lead us into any great or important Error. In these respects then the Christian Revelation is *sufficiently clear* ; and should you ask me, How is this consistent with my Interpretation of his Lordship's Doctrine ? Or how
it

it can be said to be *sufficiently clear* as to its Essential and Fundamental Articles, when confessedly Christians of all Denominations are not agreed about them ; I answer,

4. That tho' the Agreement of Christians, in what concerns the very Being of Religion, is an effectual Proof of the *Sufficiency* of the Christian Revelation for that End, and is therefore a good Argument of its Usefulness and Excellency, in Opposition to Pagan Philosophy ; yet the Argument will not hold *e converso*. 'Tis a Rule in Logic, that *universal affirmatives are not simply convertible* ; which is applicable in this Case. For we can reason *a priori* for the Sufficiency of Revelation for the End proposed, though the Event does not always answer. The Revelation is supposed to be divine, and God to be wise, just, and good, therefore it must be sufficient in itself for the Purposes intended. There are several Articles of our Religion, and those of Importance too (as you yourself must allow) concerning which there is a great Variety and wide Difference of Opinions, which yet it would be injurious to the divine Wisdom to say were not *sufficiently clear* from Scripture. — *Sufficiency* is a relative Term, for we may always ask, *Sufficient for what ?* What may be sufficient to one End, may not be so to another ; what may be sufficient to vindicate the Conduct of God towards moral Agents may be insufficient to over-rule the Prejudices and Passions of Men. And notwithstanding the Variety of Opinions concerning certain Christian Doctrines, yet still it must be allow'd, that they are sufficiently clear, if rightly attended to and sincerely regarded ; that the Blame is not to be thrown upon Revelation, but upon themselves.

And

And therefore did Christians differ even about what concerns the very *Being* of Religion, or about such Things as his Lordship has shewn that in Fact they do not differ, this would be no Proof, that such Revelation was not *sufficiently* clear, because to Christians there is another and better Proof from the Nature of the Thing, that it is and must be so ; tho' it could not be made use of against the Persons his Lordship was opposing.

Should you urge, that no Argument *a priori* can prove that to be true which is found in fact to be false : I allow it, and reply, That I am not contending for its *absolute* but *conditional* Sufficiency, such as supposes Men to make a proper use of the Faculties and Opportunities which God has given them ; and therefore renders them accountable for any Neglect or Abuse, and acquits Revelation.

But should you farther urge, that it reflects upon the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to suppose him to give such a Revelation, as he *knew* would in fact be insufficient for the End proposed ; this I must beg leave to deny.

1. Because the more Helps and Assistances God indulges Men towards the Knowledge and Practice of their Duty, so much the more are they *left without Excuse* for abusing his Favours, so much the more readily they must acquit God, and condemn themselves in their own Consciences.

2. Because as long as men are *moral* Agents, so long it will be in their Power to abuse the greatest Favours which God can grant them ; they may shut their Eyes against the clearest Light, or harden their Hearts against all means of Conviction. And therefore in this respect there

there can be no such thing as *Sufficiency*; it is impossible that God should have reveal'd any thing so clearly, as to leave no possible Room for their perverting it, or differing about it.

Thus 'tis evident to a Demonstration, that the Insufficiency of a Revelation to any End, is not to be measur'd by its not answering that End *in Fact*, but by its not being *in reason* adequate to that End, supposing Men to make that use of it that they might and ought. And with regard to the *Clearness* of the Christian Revelation; 'tis certain *a priori*, that 'tis sufficiently clear to have removed all material Differences of Opinions in religious Matters, provided Men would study it without Passion or Prejudice, and make use of all proper Helps to the understanding it; yet our Saviour foretold that there *must be*, what History and Experience shew there are and always have been, *Heresies* among Christians.

The Objection is the very same here as That from the ill Lives of Christians against the Excellency of Christianity. All Christians do not live in a constant and uniform Practice of their Duty, therefore the Christian Religion is really and in it self insufficient for that purpose. How wide the Consequence? and how inconsistent with St. Paul's Doctrine, that *Scripture was given,--- that the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works?* And if he is not so, the Blame can rest only upon himself. Indeed so far as Christianity has in fact brought about the good Ends proposed, so far we may argue for its Excellency and Sufficiency for that Purpose, but the converse of the Argument will never hold. Thus if Christians are in fact better Men, freer from notorious Corruptions in Pra-

1 Tim.
3. 17.

etice, and have their Lives and Conversations more consonant to those general Principles, which concern the very Being of Morality and Virtue, than the Pagans had; this will be a demonstrative Argument of the superior Excellency of Christianity, and of its Sufficiency for the Purposes it has answer'd. But yet sure you will not say, that it is not in itself sufficient for greater and more excellent Purposes, than thro' the Corruption and Folly of Men it has actually accomplish'd.

p. 36. What I have here mention'd in the way of Hypothesis only, my Lord of *London* has in the same *Pastoral Letter* shewn from History and Experience to have been the real Case; "That
 " the Christian Institution has in fact had a far
 " greater Effect in the Advancement of true Religion, and the Reformation of the Lives and
 " Manners of Men, than any Teaching or Discipline the World had in the days of Heathenism.—— And this is sufficient to our present Purpose, tho' so great is the Corruption
 " of human Nature, that notwithstanding those
 " Means of Instruction and those Restraints from
 " Wickedness (which Christianity affords us)
 " many Disorders and Excesses are practis'd in
 " Christian Countries. For the Design of the
 " Christian Institution was not to *force* Men to
 " be good, but only to propose fit Motives and
 " proper Encouragements to make them so;
 " and our Saviour himself supposes that in his
 " Kingdom here upon Earth, there will always
 " be Tares growing up with the Wheat (*a*
 " Mixture of Good and Bad) till he himself
 " shall make the *final* Separation." Thus his Lordship excellently argues in favour of Christianity as oppos'd to Paganism, from a Comparison

parison of the Lives and Practices of Christians with those of Pagans, as he had before done from their Principles and Articles of Faith. And as he here neither says nor supposes, that Christians are not faulty in their Practices with regard to some necessary and fundamental Branches of Duty, but only that their Lives are in the general more agreeable to the plainest and most important Precepts of Morality, than those of the Pagans were; so in the other Case he neither says nor supposes, that Christians do not differ in some great and fundamental Articles of their Religion; but yet affirms, that they are in the general agreed about those plain Articles of Faith, which relate to the Substance, the very Being of Religion; concerning which there was the widest Difference among the antient Philosophers. Thus one Argument reflects Light on the other; the Method of Deduction is the same in both, and you can therefore no more suppose, that his Lordship intended in the former to say, that Christians were agreed in all necessary Articles of Faith, than that he design'd in the latter to conclude, that their Practice was conformable to all necessary Branches of Duty.

But you ingeniously urge against Dr. Berri-
man's Interpretation of the Passage in Debate,
 'That you thought his Lordship's Pastoral Letters
 had been in Defence of Christianity in particular.
 You should rather have said, of *Reveal'd Reli-*
gion in particular, for that I take to be his
 Lordship's principal Design; tho' accidentally,
 and *ex abundanti*, he speaks in one part, of the
 peculiar Excellencies of the *Christian* Revelation.
 His Arguments are levell'd, not against *Jews*
 but *Deists*. He is here shewing the great Ad-
 vantage of a Divine Revelation, without consi-

p. 35.

 Part I. c. 2.
 p. 35.

dering minutely what concerns the *Christian*, as such. But be that as it will: Does Dr. *Berriman* affirm or intimate, that *his Lordship* had written in Defence only of Religion in general? Or is this implied in his saying, that *his Lordship* speaks here of Religion only in a general View? I presume you will allow it to be one Argument in favour of a *Divine Revelation*, that it explains, clears, and enforces the principal Branches of natural Religion; tho' 'tis plain, that the Branches of natural Religion (which I presume is what the Doctor means by *Religion in general*) are not distinguishing parts of Christianity.

Your next Argument against the Doctor built upon the scholastic Axiom, GENERALS INCLUDE PARTICULARS, I scarce know what to make of. Upon considering it every way, it seems to resolve into this *Dilemma*, 'tis either false Logic, which I would not willingly impute to you, or the most glaring Misrepresentation, which I am still less willing to suppose you guilty of. If you mean, that a Defence of *Religion in general* must include a Defence of *Christianity in particular*, this will be just as good Logic as to say, That because the *genus* Animal includes under it the *Species* Man, Horse, &c. therefore a Definition of Animal is a Definition of Man in particular, or as distinguish'd from Horse. Whereas the Case is just the reverse; the more general an Idea is, so much the fewer Ideas 'tis made up of; and therefore something more is requisite to the Defence of *Christianity in particular*, than of *Religion in general*. Thus Christians of all Denominations agree in those general Articles, which concern the very Being of Natural Religion; tho' they differ as to some that are distinguishing and essential Parts

of the Christian Institution; as concerning a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, the Necessity of Water-Baptism, and the like.-----But if you take the other part of the Dilemma, and say you speak of *Christianity* in general, as your Words seem to imply, then what Excuse can you have for thus representing the Doctor's Meaning, when he not only expressly says, that he interprets the Bishop's Words of *Religion* in general, as distinguish'd from *Christianity*, but 'tis plain, that his whole Argument against you is built upon that Supposition; and therefore there was scarce a Possibility of mistaking him.

And thus, Sir, I think, I have given an easy and natural Interpretation of what his Lordship means *by the Substance of Religion and the necessary Enforcements of the Practice of it*; and shewn, that he speaks of *Religion as such*, of the prime Verities and plainest Outlines of Duty, or (as his Lordship expresses the same Thought in other Words a few Lines before) *of Points which concern the very BEING of Religion and Virtue*. This is a Sense nervous and strong, as well as clear and consistent, consistent with the Context, and with the Argument in hand, as well as with Truth.

I can think of but one Objection more to this Interpretation, which can be worth considering. After enumerating those primary Articles of natural Religion, *the Being of a God, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments*, in which the several Denominations of Christians agree, his Lordship next proceeds to some other Articles in which there is as universal an Agreement; as “That Christ was a Teacher sent from God,

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“that

“ that all Christians are bound to declare and
 “ profess themselves to be his Disciples; that
 “ not only the Exercise of the several Virtues,
 “ but also a Belief in Christ is necessary in or-
 “ der to their obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the
 “ Favour of God, and eternal Life; that the
 “ Worship of God is to be perform’d chiefly by
 “ the Heart in Prayers, Praises, and Thank-
 “ givings; and as to all other Points, that they
 “ are bound to live by the Rules, which Christ
 “ and his Apostles have left them in the holy
 “ Scriptures.” This is what you call *his Lord-*
ship’s SUMMARY of Christianity; but I think
 ’tis evident from the *imperfect Enumeration*, that
 his Lordship intended no such thing. For what
 do you think of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper,
 of the several Articles of Redemption and San-
 ctification, of the Doctrines of a Resurrection
 and last Judgment, and many more that might
 be nam’d? Are not these Necessaries as well as
 the others? Or can you have such a low Notion
 of his Lordship’s Christianity as to allow them
 no place in his Creed? So short a System may
 well enough suit with some Dispositions, but I
 believe you are the only one, who will give it
 as his Lordship’s. And if you will please to read
 over the *sixth* general Head of the same *Pastoral*
Letter, you may be convinced that his Lordship
 would include a great deal more, than you in-
 tend, in a Summary of Christianity.

But you will say, however that may be, be it
 a complete *Summary* or not, yet ’tis certain that
 he mentions some Articles which are no Part of
 Natural Religion, and therefore that can’t be
 what his Lordship means by *Religion* in the Pas-
 sage in question, and consequently it can mean
 nothing less than Christianity. But I answer
 this

this is judging from only a partial View of his Lordship's Argument ; for his Lordship is not only comparing Christianity with *Pagan* Philosophy, as it was free from those Differences *which were among the Philosophers in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment*, but also as *no one Philosopher had more Right than another to impose his Scheme upon Mankind* ; which last Reason made it necessary for his Lordship to shew that Revelation had such a right. Divine Revelation gives us a *Rule of Faith*, which mere Philosophy wanted ; and therefore his Lordship adds to the Argument in Favour of Christianity, built upon a suppos'd Agreement of Christians concerning the Substance of Religion, another taken from its Authority and Weight, which Christians of all Denominations were likewise agreed about ; as that *Christ was a Teacher sent from God, and that his Apostles were divinely inspir'd*, with some few Articles more, which were so immediately and necessarily connected with them, that Christians must as necessarily agree in them also. And thus his Lordship has shewn beyond all contradiction the superior Excellency of reveal'd Religion to the antient Philosophy, in the two Instances propos'd, as from the endless Differences among the Philosophers in points of the greatest Weight and Moment, and from the insufficiency of all their Schemes for want of a proper Authority to impose them upon Mankind ; and yet he has judiciously avoided the other Extreme of asserting a greater Agreement and Unanimity among Christians than was necessary to his Argument, or consistent with Fact and Experience.

I shall therefore beg leave in this Place to make use of your own Words. *It were easy to add*

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p. 20.

p. 23.

add many other things of this Nature to confirm his Lordship's Meaning in this excellent Passage; but as I presume it fully appears, from what has been already said, I shall give you no farther trouble on this Head, but proceed to consider another Passage in his Lordship's Pastoral Letter, which I shall shew that you have mistaken as much as the former.

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P. 25.

II. The Passage I mean is a Continuation of that which I have cited in p. 22. and runs thus : *Here then is a fix'd, certain, and uniform Rule of Faith and Practice, containing all the MOST NECESSARY POINTS OF RELIGION; establish'd by a divine Sanction, embraced as such by all Denominations of Christians, and in itself abundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of Religion in the World.* This I take to be a succinct Account, or a kind of Recapitulation of what his Lordship had just before said more at large : And therefore the preceding Paragraph will serve for a Comment upon this; if it really wants a Comment. What his Lordship call'd before *the Substance of Religion*, and *the very Being of Religion and Virtue*, he here expresses by *the MOST NECESSARY Points of Religion* ; and therefore what I have said already to shew that the Bishop speaks of *Religion as such*, or of the primary and fundamental Principles of *Natural Religion*, is also to be applied here : Which I take to be a Key to the whole Paragraph. Thither therefore I refer you for Brevity's sake, leaving you to make the Application, which is so easy and obvious : And you will find that it effectually disarms you of all those Consequences, which you would gladly fix upon his Lordship.

But you lay great Stress upon the Words *most necessary*, and turn them into Variety of Shapes, in order to shew, that his Lordship must intend by them *the Substance of Religion, the essential and fundamental Points* of it, in such a Sense as to exclude all other Points from being *necessary* in any Degree or in any View whatever. Your Learned Adversary had distinguish'd between *most necessary* and *necessary*, a Distinction which you treat with an Air of Ridicule, and triumph with a Levity that was by no means decent in an Address to the *Lord Bishop of London*. But if you please, Sir, to recollect a little, and consider over again your own Instance taken from the Properties of Matter, perhaps you may be convinced that your Triumph came before the Victory; that the very Instance you give proves directly against you, and therefore the Ridicule must fall on another Person than you intended. *Divisibility and Gravitation* (say you) are *necessary Properties of Matter*. *They are inseparable from it, and contain'd in the very Idea of it; now can anything be more necessary than these necessary Properties?—Where there is real Necessity, there can be no Degrees of Comparison.* A very little Acquaintance with the *Newtonian Philosophy*, would have shewn you, that this is all Mistake; and a proper Application of this very Instance to the Subject in hand might have set you right, and shewn you the Justness of distinguishing *Necessity* into different Kinds; which in common Language amounts to the same, as the Distinction into different Degrees, and is, as I shall shew you, no *new-coin'd Distinction*.

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p. 22.

Necessity is always *relative*, and what may be *necessary* in one respect, may not be so in another.

other. And when there is such a Connection between two Things, that the Idea of one implies, or cannot be conceiv'd without the Idea of the other, that I call *Necessity* in the highest Sense, or *Necessity absolute in its self*; not as opposed to *relative*, but to *contingent*. Thus in your Instance, Divisibility is absolutely or in the highest Sense *necessary* to Matter; because it is contain'd in the very Idea of it. Matter cannot be so much as conceiv'd to exist without it. But Gravitation is necessary in another, and that a secondary or lower Sense. Matter can be conceiv'd to exist without it, and therefore it is not essential or necessary to it as Matter: But in another View it is necessary, *viz.* as Matter is conceiv'd to exist under such a particular Frame, as Experiment and Observation shew it in fact to exist under. It is necessary to it under its present Circumstances, as 'tis suppos'd to be a universal Property: And as soon as you conceive the material World to be divested of it, the Frame, under which the present System appears, will be quite alter'd, tho' the Matter it self will yet remain *. And thus you see, Divisibility

* The ingenious Dr. Pemberton in his *View of Sir Isaac Newton's Philosophy*, p. 20. says; "Every Property of which any Particle of Matter is in itself possess'd, and which is not barely the Consequence of the Union of this Particle with other Portions of Matter, we may call an *essential* Property. Extension we apprehend to be one of these essential Properties, and Impenetrability another.—But (p. 22.) we should not hastily conclude, that whatever is found to appertain to all Matter, which falls under our Examination, must for that Reason only be an essential Property thereof, and not
" be

sibility is necessary to Matter in one Sense, and Gravitation in another ; and perhaps there may be no Impropriety in saying, that Divisibility is a Quality *more necessary* to Matter, than that *necessary one* of Gravitation. And thus in your other Instance, an honest Heart is necessary to a good Writer in one View, and a clear Head in another ; and the former I should put in a higher Degree of Necessity than the latter, tho' possibly some may place them upon a Level, or invert the Order of them.

And now to apply this Distinction to the Subject in Debate. Necessity may in like manner be applied to different Articles of Religion in different Senses ; some may be necessary to one end or in one view, some in another ; and according to the importance of those several views or ends, so the several Necessities may be rank'd into different Orders or Classes, or be distinguish'd into different Degrees. Thus those Articles which are necessary to the very *Being* of Religion as such, or without which there can

“ be deriv'd from some unseen Disposition in the
 “ Frame of Nature. Sir ISAAC NEWTON has found
 “ Reason to conclude, that Gravity is a Property
 “ universally belonging to all the perceptible Bodies
 “ in the Universe, and to every Particle of Matter
 “ whereof they are composed. But yet he no where
 “ asserts this Property to be essential to Matter.
 “ And he was so far from having any Design of
 “ establishing it, as such, that on the contrary he
 “ has given some Hints worthy of himself at a Cause
 “ for it ; and expressly says, that he propos'd those
 “ Hints to shew, that he had no such Intention.”
 See Cotes's *Preface* to Sir Isaac Newton's *Princip.*
Mathemat. and Dr. Cheyne's *Philosophical Principles*,
 P. 40.

be no Religion, may be absolutely or primarily necessary, or necessary in the first and highest degree, or *most necessary*; such are, what his Lordship instances in, *the Being of a God, and a Providence, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, a future State of Rewards and Punishments*. In the next Place there are other Articles, which, tho' not necessary to the very Being of Religion, yet are necessary in another view, *viz.* to preserve in the World a due Reverence and Regard to the Deity; as Worship of him and him only, Prayers, Praises and Thanksgivings, and avoiding profane Swearing, &c. These may be call'd necessary in the next degree, as being of secondary Consideration and Importance. Again, there are other Articles, which may not be necessary in the two former respects, and yet are so in another view, *viz.* to preserve the Peace and Happiness of this Life, as Justice, and Mercy, with the Duties of the second Table: And these may be in a lower degree of Necessity than the former. Again, there may be other Duties, which may be necessary in none of the former respects, and yet may be necessary to another End, and may stand in a still lower degree of Necessity than the other, as Temperance, Sobriety, and those other Duties, which are necessary for the Preservation of our Health. And thus those several Points of Religion may be all necessary, and yet stand in different Orders or Classes; or in different degrees of Necessity. For Necessity is here the Relation of *Means* to an *End*; and may be properly greater or less, as the End is more or less important. Farther, Necessity may be distinguish'd with regard to different Persons, or to the same Persons under different Circumstances.

Different

Different Stations and Circumstances are different Relations ; and may therefore be a foundation for different Duties : And thus what may be necessary for one Person may not be so for another ; what may be Duty to a Magistrate, may not be so to a Subject ; and what may be a necessary Article of Faith to a Scholar, may not be so to a Peasant ; as there may be others, which are necessary for all. Thus what are necessary to the very *Being* of Religion, or what his Lordship calls *most necessary*, are necessary to all Men *as Men*, or as rational Creatures. And thus what are necessary to the very Being and Essence of *Christianity* (or what are usually call'd *Fundamentals*) are necessary to Christians as *Christians*, or as Members of the Church of Christ. And thus lastly, what may not be necessary to all Christians, may yet be necessary to some Christians, to Christians under certain Circumstances ; those may not be necessary to the unlearned, which yet are so to Divines and Scholars.

But you urge, that *nothing can be necessary at all, which is not absolutely, indispensably, and most necessary*. Here is much the same Fallacy, as we meet with in a famous Book, call'd *Christianity as old as the Creation* : “ No Rational Creature, who attends to the Dictates of his own Mind, can be ignorant of his Duty, so far as 'tis *necessary* for him to know it.” The ambiguity lies in the Word *necessary* ; and what seems to be wondrous shrewd under the Shelter of that *equivocal* Term, will appear to be a mere Quibble, if you ask this plain Question, *Necessary for what ?* Preservation from Misery, the lowest degree of positive Happiness, and a high degree of Happiness, are all so many different Ends ;

Letter,
p. 25.

p. 372.
Ed. 4th.

Ends ; and what is necessary for the last, is not necessary for either of the former. The meanest Parts and Acquirements may be all that are necessary for the two first, when somewhat more is necessary for the other. Thus following mere natural Light may be all that is necessary for such as can have no Knowledge of Revelation : embracing the indispensable and essential Parts of Christianity may be all that is necessary for *his* Salvation, who has not Abilities or Opportunities of entering into the more remote Parts and minute Circumstances of it. But as I presume you must allow (what is plain from the *Parable of the Talents*, and several other Parts of Scripture, as well as agreeable to common Sense) that Persons of superior Abilities, who acquire a more adequate Knowledge of the several parts of their Religion, and make a proper Use of them, will have a superior Reward ; so I think, we may justly say, that a complete Knowledge of our Religion may be necessary to such as have Abilities for it, tho' not so *indispensably* necessary, as of what concerns the very Being and Essence of Christianity. *

By this time, Sir, I hope you perceive that the learned Doctor's distinction is not merely
 Letter, *nominal*, or a *Distinction without a Difference*,
 p. 22. but what there was good ground for. But if you will still insist, that 'tis not proper to speak

* Thus the learned Dr. *Waterland* : " A Doctrine
 " may be said to be *necessary* to the Being of the
 " Church, or to the Salvation of some Persons so
 " and so qualified, or to the Salvation of *All*: And
 " many Questions may arise about the precise *De-*
 " gree of the Necessity in every Instance." *Import-*
ance of the Trin. p. 9.

of different degrees of Necessity (because what is necessary can be no more than necessary) if you insist, that what I have said amounts only to a Proof of different kinds of Necessity, with relation to different Ends, this will be only a Dispute about *Words*, and what 'tis not worth contending for. You must still allow the *Thing*, viz. That Points of Religion may be necessary in one view, that are not so in another ; That their Necessity may be more or less extensive according to the nature of the End proposed ; That what may be necessary for the Being and Support of *Christianity* as such, may not be necessary for the Being and Support of *Religion* as such ; and That what Points are necessary for this last End are the most extensively necessary, or of the first Importance, or what his Lordship calls *the most necessary Points of Religion*.

This is the way I chuse to take in explaining what is meant by different degrees of Necessity, as it seems to me to be the most exact, and least liable to Exception ; but I may add, that there are also different degrees of Necessity, with regard to the *same End*, in a popular Sense at least, if not in a strict or philosophical one. Thus Sleep, Temperance and Exercise may be all necessary for the Preservation of Health ; and yet, I believe, a Physician will tell you, that they are not all *equally* necessary, but their Necessity stands perhaps in the Order of the three degrees of Comparison. And thus Prayer and Fasting may be necessary to a religious course of Life, yet not equally so ; and both of them may still be *less* necessary than those *most* necessary Articles of a Belief in God, and of a future State.

III. But I go on to consider another Passage in the *Pastoral Letter*, from whence you would conclude, that his Lordship must mean, that Christians of all Denominations are agreed about all the necessary and fundamental Articles of their Religion. The Passage, I mean, is this; “As to Points of greater Intricacy, and which require uncommon Degrees of Penetration and Knowledge; such indeed have been Subjects of Dispute among Persons of *Study* and *Learning* in the several Ages of the Christian Church; but the *People* are not oblig’d to enter into them, so long as they do not touch the *Foundations* of Christianity, nor have an Influence upon Practice. In other Points, it is sufficient that they believe the Doctrines so far as they find, upon due Enquiry and Examination, according to their several Abilities and Opportunities, that God has reveal’d them.” What his Lordship here says is very rational and consistent, but express’d succinctly and in few Words; as it is not to be expected, that upon such a copious Subject as a Defence of Revelation, his Lordship should discuss every Point at large in the narrow Compass of a *Pastoral Letter* to his Diocese. Yet I think the Words are full and plain enough to stand clear of the meaning you would give them, and of the Consequences you would deduce from them. His Lordship had before shewn, that all Christians were agreed agreed about the plainest and *most necessary* Points, about what concern’d the *Substance*, the very *Being* of Religion; and he here answers a tacit Objection of Unbelievers, that Christianity contains Abundance of intricate Points, which the generality of People were not competent Judges of; which even the Learned were no more agreed about

about than the Philosophers were about their Doctrines, and which yet were requir'd to be believ'd as necessary and fundamental Parts of our Religion. To this his Lordship answers by distinguishing between *the Doctrines themselves, which God had reveal'd*, and *the Points of greater or more than ordinary Intricacy, which require uncommon Degrees of Penetration and Knowledge, and which the People are not oblig'd to enter into, so long as, or because, (as I'll allow the Words may be interpreted) they [those intricate Points] do not touch the Foundations of Christianity, nor have an Influence upon Practice.* The Distinction is here the same as his Lordship had made a little before between the *Circumstances and the Substance, the Manner of Things and the Things themselves.* And thus if you will allow his Lordship to be his own Interpreter, it will be clear what he means by the Points of greater, or more than ordinary Intricacy, viz. *the Circumstances of Things, not the Substance; the Manner of them, not the Things themselves*; which are what seldom or never touch the Foundations of Christianity, or have an Influence upon Practice. But yet this does not excuse the People from looking into, or believing the Doctrines themselves which God has reveal'd; for his Lordship expressly says, *It is sufficient if they believe the Doctrines*; which implies, that they ought to believe them. The Doctrines themselves, as contain'd in certain express Propositions penn'd for our Instruction by holy Men of old, under the Guidance or Influence of God's Holy Spirit, may be clear and explicit, when yet there may be several Minutenesses, or remote Consequences and Appendages to them; which, as they may usefully engage the Attention of Men of Parts

and Learning, so they will be no more the Concern of the Unlearned, (as lying out of their Sphere) than the Study of Mathematics or Astronomy.

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p. 28.

To this Interpretation you may possibly give your Assent upon the fond Hopes, that it will square with your Notion of *an universal* Agreement among Christians in all necessary Points, and infer all those valuable Consequences of Latitude and Comprehension, which you have deduced, and would gladly impute to his Lordship. Thus you think, *all dissenting Christians, i. e. all who call themselves Christians (be they Ari-ans or Socinians, Quakers or Anabaptists, be they for Calvin or the Pope, for the Kirk or the Inquisition) stand upon a Level with those of the Establishment, are equally Christians and Brethren, united in the same common Faith, and equally Heirs of the same common Salvation, as, or because, they agree in all Points, which touch the Foundations of Christianity, and have an Influence upon Practice.* But, good Sir, where does his Lordship say this or any thing like it? Or by what Rules of Logic will you deduce it from the Explication given of the Passage in Question? *Points of Intricacy the People are not obliged to enter into.-----In other Points it is sufficient if they believe the Doctrines.* All the Distinction his Lordship here makes, is betwixt the Doctrines which 'tis sufficient for the People to believe, and the Points they are not oblig'd to enter into or believe, viz. *Points of Intricacy.* His Lordship does not particularly define, what are those Doctrines which 'tis sufficient for the People to believe, but he opposes them to Points of Intricacy. To be a Point of Intricacy or not, is a kind of Criterion, by which we are to judge

judge whether the People are, or are not obliged to believe it. The whole therefore that this amounts to is, That the Doctrines, that the People are oblig'd to believe, are not Points of Intricacy; or in other Words, That the necessary and fundamental Doctrines of Christianity are at least plainly and clearly reveal'd; which is saying no more than the most judicious and orthodox Divines have said, yea, and prov'd too *. But is this affirming, that all Denominations of Christians agree in Fundamentals? or that Fundamentals are so plain and clear, as irresistibly to work Conviction, or make it absolutely impossible for Men to err about them? or can you think his Lordship capable of saying a thing so weak and irrational as the one, or so contrary to Fact and Observation as the other? The Truth is, his Lordship has left these two Points *in medio*, neither affirming nor denying any thing about them.

Upon this Footing Christianity may be defended against the Objections of Infidels, and upon this his Lordship has defended it beyond all reasonable Exception; tho' there is no Argument so strong, but what its false Friends or profess'd Enemies may warp or cavil at. I can see no other way of vindicating our Religion against the Objection suppos'd; for to attempt to vindicate it by false Facts or false Reasonings, is betraying and weakening, not truly supporting it. Deists may tell us, That *Christians are divided even in what they call Fundamentals*, or

Letter,
p. 29.

* Thus Dr. Waterland gives it as one mark of Fundamentals, that "they are *plainly*, frequently, and "strongly inculcated in Scripture." *Importance of the Trin.* p. 8.

Letter,
p. 30.

that Divines differ in explaining what they mean by Divine Person, Essence, Trinity, or a hundred more such Terms if you please; yet this will make no Impression upon well-disposed Minds, nor be any Reason to them to conclude, that *Christianity is not sufficiently clear and explicit*, or that *it leaves Christians in the dark, as much as natural Reason*; because of the former Difficulty they have this ready Solution, That no divine Revelation can be *sufficiently clear* to overrule necessarily the Passions and Prejudices of Men without destroying their Free-agency, which may therefore account for their Differences; and as to the latter, they can answer, That *Christians are not in the dark*, nor do differ so much as those that had no Guide but *natural Reason*, because they are agreed about those essential Points of Religion, concerning which the Philosophers differ'd.

ibid.

I confess, you have press'd the Objection something farther than had been done before by the Author of *Christianity as old as the Creation*, and others of the Tribe, whom his Lordship was confuting. Yet I think, all the additional Strength you have given it may be enervated and destroy'd upon the same Principles. What you urge, is this; *it signifies nothing that Christianity settles some Points of Importance that natural Reason could not determine; if it introduces others of EQUAL IMPORTANCE, that natural Reason would never have thought of, and leaves them in a State of Obscurity and Uncertainty.* This is the Reinforcement you have given to the Infidel-Objection; this the *important Difficulty* you have rais'd, and know not how to get rid of upon Dr. Berriman's *Distinction*. Please to consider what follows, and perhaps

ibid.

haps it may help you out of it, consistent with the Doctor's Principles.

I must beg leave to deny, that the Points which Christianity has introduc'd, and about which Christians differ, are of *equal* Importance with those of Natural Religion ; about which Christians are agreed, and the Philosophers differ'd. The Being of a God, the essential Difference between Virtue and Vice, a future State of Rewards and Punishments, are Articles essential to Religion as Religion, and therefore must be of primary Consideration and Importance, above those which are only essential to Christianity as Christianity : for what is essential to the *Genus*, is prior in order of Nature, prior in Weight and Dignity to that which is only essential to the *Species*. Belief in God is essential to Religion in the *Abstract* ; Belief in Christ is essential to the *Christian* Religion : The latter supposes the former, but the former does not suppose the latter ; or he that believes in Christ, must necessarily believe in God, but not *vice versa* : And again, he that denies the Existence of God, subverts the Truth of Christianity ; as he, that roots up the Foundation, overturns the Superstructure and all that belongs to it, tho' the Superstructure may be pull'd down without destroying the Foundation. And therefore to deny the Being of a God is an Error of worse Consequence than to deny either the Divinity or Incarnation of Christ. Thus also 'tis evident, that a corrupt Christianity is better than no Christianity, that a bad Religion is better than none, Deism better than Atheism ; and therefore that the fundamental Articles of *Natural* Religion are more necessary than those of the *Christian*. And this is exactly agreeable to Dr.

Berri-

- Review, *Berriman's Account*. "Those Points of Belief
 p. 5. "are the *most necessary*, which distinguish us
 "from down-right Infidels — Those that di-
 "stinguish us from *Arians* and *Socinians* are ne-
 "cessary also, although not in the same degree
 "with the other, if degrees of Comparison may
 "be allow'd ;" as I have shewn, they may,
 above. But, it seems, the learned Doctor has
 p. 6. said, that we differ *about the proper Object of*
religious Worship. I suppose, Sir, you will not
 deny, that some Christians worship Christ as a
 divine Person, others as a Creature : The *Soci-*
nians themselves, (at least the best Part of them)
 however they degraded the Son of God in other
 respects, went not so far as to throw off the
 Worship of him ; * though I am not sure, but
 some *Arians* may. What then will you reply
 to this Argument ? Will you say that Christi-
 ans are all agreed about the Object of Wor-
 ship, or will you deny this to be a necessary or
 important Article ? If you take the former Part
 of the Dilemma, you contradict a Fact the most
 notorious of any in the World : If the latter,
 you deny what is evident to a Demonstration,
 and what (if I understand you right) you have
 sometimes allow'd, speaking of this Article, as
 Letter, *a most material and important Point*, and a
 p. 21. *prime Article of Religion*. Thus you must al-
- p. 34.

* 'Tis plain from the *Racovian Catechism*, that
 the *Socinians* not only admitted the Worship of the
 Son, but even made it a *fundamental* Article of
 Christianity. "Facile intelligitur eos, qui nomen
 "Domini Jesu Christi *invocare* nolunt, Christianos
 "hactenus non esse ; quamvis alioqui Christi no-
 "men profiteantur, & doctrinæ illius se adhærere
 "dicant. *Catechism. Racov.*

low,

low, that Christians differ about the Object of Worship, you must allow that this is a Difference in a material and necessary Article, and you maintain, that there are no degrees of Necessity, that what is necessary at all must be *most* necessary ; and how then will you get rid of the Deist's Objection, which upon our Principles vanishes at once ? For I am to observe, that Christians are thus far agreed about the Object of Worship ; they all worship the One God, the Creator and Governour of all things, *Jehovah* and the God of *Israel*, God both of the Old Testament and New, which is what the Pagans did not : Most of them that paid any Worship to God at all, did it to I know not what *Jupiter*, or an *unknown God*. In this respect then Divine Revelation has the advantage of mere Reason or Philosophy, in the primary or most material Article of divine Worship. But Revelation has made further Discoveries concerning the nature of the Deity, as that there are Three Divine Persons coeternal and coequal, each of which bears a distinct Part in Man's Redemption ; which, when known to be true, must certainly be necessary to be believ'd. For 'tis necessary that we consider each Person, as being what he is, as standing in that relation to us, which he really does stand in. As to these Particulars Christians are not entirely agreed ; which, tho' they may be necessary in some respects, or to some ends, which may be more or less important, yet are not necessary in the same respects, or to the same ends, as this general Truth is, That God the Creator and Governour of the World is to be worshipp'd. This is necessary to preserve the very Being of Religion in the World, which is the most important Point of all ; the
other

other may be necessary, but for an End less important, as to preserve in the World a pure and perfect Christianity. To conclude this Point : The Object of Worship may be considered in two different respects ; either as to the *One Being* who is worshipp'd, or the *Three Divine Persons* united in that one Being. As to the former, Christians are agreed, which the Pagans were not ; as to the latter indeed they differ, (tho' by the Fault of themselves, not of Revelation) but the former I have shewn to be much more necessary and important than the other, as it secures the main Principle of natural Religion, and as the Denial of it must necessarily be attended with greater Damnation. And therefore it can't be said, that, " tho' it settles many " Points which natural Reason could not determine, yet it hath introduc'd others of *equal Importance*, and left even *good and honest Men* " to eternal Disputes and Differences about " them."

Letter,
p. 30.

And now, Sir, give me leave to look back, and observe what your Conduct has been in this pretended *Vindication* of the Lord Bishop of London. What might have been reasonably expected, was not barely an Attempt to shew what were his Lordship's Sentiments in the Passage intended, but a real Vindication of them, upon the just Principles of Religion and Reason. For, I know not by what Figure of Rhetoric, you will make an *Interpretation* of a Passage to be the same, as a *Vindication* of the Sentiments suppos'd to be contain'd in it. And what if you had made good the Point you have labour'd ? What if you had shewn, that all the World had till now been mistaken in his Lordship ? What if you had prov'd, that his Lordship thought the

Dis-

Differences among Christians were not material, or that he was for encouraging your *Plan of Union*, and opening a Door for a Comprehension of all Sects and Parties? Would his Lordship's single Authority, however great in other Cases, (I would speak it with just Deference) would a single Authority have been sufficient to weigh in the Ballance against the united Voices of the most Learned in the several Ages of the Church, or against Scripture, Reason and constant Experience? Or could *You* with a due Decorum and Consistency lay such a Weight upon it in this Instance, when you shew so little Regard to it in all other Cases? I must own, Sir, that, though I pay as great a Deference to my Lord of *London's* Judgment as to any Man's, yet in a Case so plain, it would have weigh'd but little with me. And therefore I can't but think, that you have dropt the most material Point in giving us a **P L A N**, and leaving us to find out the Arguments and Reasons to support it. But to wave this; What is the Method you have taken in explaining his Lordship's Meaning? Have you carefully attended to the Argument, and interpreted the Words agreeably thereto, or consistently with the Rules of Language and Criticism? Or have you not used a little dexterous Management and Shuffling of Words, in order to make such sentiments turn up as were agreeable to your Wishes and Inclinations? Please, Sir, but to consider how you have dealt with the three Passages I have examin'd, in order to make them speak as you would have them. In the *first*, you have chang'd **RELIGION** into **CHRISTIANITY**, which is the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*, the fundamental Error, which runs thro' the whole. Can you think his Lordship so inaccurate a Writer, as to use the Words

promiscuously, when the whole Argument turn'd upon a just and proper use of them? In the *second*, you have interpreted the *MOST necessary Points*, as if his Lordship had said *ALL the necessary* ones; which are plainly as different as a *part* and a *whole*. And in the *third*, you have explain'd *POINTS OF INTRICACY*, as exclusive of the essential Articles of *Religion* only, when his Lordship plainly uses them, as oppos'd to the several Doctrines of *Christianity*, which are *necessary* to be believ'd more or less. And thus you have play'd one and the same Game throughout, abusing Words and warping Expressions, as it best suited your own Hypothesis. This is what appears to me to be the Truth of the Case after the most impartial and attentive Examination; and therefore you will not take it amiss, that I put you in mind of your Promise;

P. 5. *If I can be convinc'd, even that I have mistaken your Lordship's meaning, I will not so much as plead the Liableness of human Nature to Error, but readily and publickly humble my self, and ask your Lordship's Pardon.* This looks fair and decent; and I don't doubt of your *Conviction*, if you will but please to give this the Reading, with the same attentive and unprejudiced Mind, with which I read your Letter to his Lordship.

And here, Sir, I might fairly take my Leave, having in my humble Opinion fully explain'd the Passages in Question, in his Lordship's *Pastoral Letter*, and answer'd every thing suggested in favour of your Interpretation, which carries the Face of an Argument: And I hope, it sufficiently appears, that nothing like the Opinion you are pleas'd to impute to his Lordship, is either contain'd in his Words, or implied in the Argu-

Argument he was upon. And as to the several Consequences you have deduced from the Principles suppos'd to be his Lordship's in favour of your comprehensive Scheme, or PLAN for Christian Union, they are all your own, and his Lordship stands clear of them : The Foundation being rooted up, your noble Superstructure falls of Course.

Had you been pleas'd to have enter'd into the Merits of the Cause, and given us Reasons to support your general Position and the Inferences from it, they should have been duely considered, as they might have furnish'd Matter for very useful Enquiries, and led our Thoughts to the Consideration of Points of great Weight and Moment. And when any thing of that kind shall appear, it may be soon enough to enter particularly into those Matters.

But because, in your next Essay, you may possibly tell us, that if those you have imputed to his Lordship are not his Lordship's real Sentiments, yet they *ought* to be, and therefore you were willing, extremely willing, to suppose they were ; I shall briefly give you my Thoughts concerning the general Method of distinguishing *Fundamentals* from *Non-fundamentals* ; or of finding, what are the Points, which 'tis necessary for People to unite and agree in, and what they may differ about, consistently with the Peace and Unity of the Church. I shall not descend to Particulars, but leave you to make the Application ; by which you will easily see, whether the Differences subsisting among Christians, are so insignificant as you pretend ; whether in fact they agree in *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*, and ought therefore to unite in Communion ; or whether the Case be not quite otherwise.

Indeed there is a certain Sense, in which several Authors, both antient and modern, have said, that all Christians agree in the *Essentials* of Christianity; * meaning thereby, that unless they do so agree, they are not properly *Christians*, whatever they may call themselves. This I just hint by the way, to obviate an Objection which might arise from the ambiguous Sense of the Word *Christian*. To say, that all Christians are agreed in this Sense is true, but not to the Purpose; for the Question is, whether all Denominations of Christians, or all who profess Christianity, be agreed in *Fundamentals* or not? I proceed therefore to enquire,

I. What *kind* of Doctrines those are, which are to be look'd upon as *fundamental*, or necessary for Christians in order to their *Unity* in Church-Communion.

II. What those are, in which a *Latitude* may be allow'd, or concerning which Christians may

* This is what *Irenæus* means, when he says; Τὸ τοῦ κήρυγμα παρειληφύια, καὶ ταύτην τὴν πίσιν ἡ ἐκκλησία, καίπερ ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ δισπαρμένη ἐπιμελῶς φυλάσσει, ὡς ἑνα οἶκον οἰκᾷσα—καὶ οὔτε αἱ ἐν Γερμανίας ἰδρύμεναι ἐκκλησίαι ἄλλως πεπιστεύασιν, ἢ ἄλλως παραδιδόσιν, οὔτε ἐν ταῖς Ἱσπερίαις, οὔτε ἐν Κελτίαις, &c. *Iren. adv. Hæres. L. I. c. 1.* And to this Purpose Mr. *Chillingworth* speaks; "When we say, that there shall be a Church always unerring in *Fundamentals*; our Meaning is but this, that there shall be always a Church, to the very Being whereof it is repugnant, that it should err in *Fundamentals*; for if it should do so, it would want the very Essence of a Church, and therefore cease to be a Church." *Chillingw. Relig. of Protestants. Chap. 3. §. 55.*

differ;

differ, consistently with the *Peace* and *Unity* of the Church.

I. As there are some Articles essential to Religion *as Religion*, so there must be some that are essential to Christianity *as Christianity* ; and as the latter is a *Species* comprehended under the other, so it must require something more to constitute its Essence. With respect to these Christianity is a fix'd, certain, and determinate thing ; it subsists while they subsist, and when they are destroy'd, it is destroy'd also. They no more alter with Mens Circumstances or Conditions, than abstract Ideas alter by a Change in Particulars. Indeed the Case is the same in the Christian Religion, as in every thing else : there is something necessary to its very Existence, and something entirely destructive of it. Thus there are certain things necessary to the Preservation of Life ; as Respiration, Circulation of the Blood, &c. as there are others as necessarily destructive of it ; as thrusting a Dagger into the Heart, drinking Poison, &c. Apply this Instance to Religion ; and the former we call *fundamental Truths*, the latter *fundamental Errors*. I am here speaking of Christianity, as abstracted from particular Persons ; for with respect to them, 'tis an indeterminate thing. We can never determine what is indispensably necessary to the Salvation of each particular Person ; or rather, there can be no such thing as a Standard for Fundamentals to all, * any more than

* " That may be sufficiently declar'd to one,
 " which to another is not sufficiently declar'd, and
 " con-

than there can be a Coat to fit Persons of all Sizes. Or if we should think this might be done by bringing it down as low as possible; yet we shall find, that we can never know what will be low enough: for as in the natural World there is a Scale of Beings rising gradually from insensible Matter to the highest created Intelligence, so that 'tis impossible to determine where the indivisible Line passes, which distinguishes the several Ranks or Classes of Beings; so in the Christian World there is such a Variety in Mens Abilities, with regard to Religion, as rises by a gradual Ascent from the lowest to the highest, and makes it impossible to assign the Partition which divides the Classes of Fundamentals and Non-fundamentals, or to say, thus much is necessary for the lowest Class of Christians, and no more. But yet this hinders not but Christianity may be a determinate Thing in the *Abstract*, or without respect to particular Persons: And 'tis evident that it must be so, as there must be certain Things necessary to its Support and Subsistence, as a System of Religion, or a general Rule of Faith and Manners. And this is what we must endeavour to preserve simple and entire, and have no Communion with such as do not. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this Doctrine, receive him not into your House, neither bid him, God speed.*

The next Consideration then is, How, or by what Rules, we shall judge what is thus neces-

“consequently that may be fundamental and necessary to one, which to another is not so. Which Variety of Circumstances makes it impossible to set down an exact Catalogue of Fundamentals.”
 Chillingworth's *Religion of Protest*, Ch. 3. §. 13.

sary

fary or essential to our Religion, and what is not of so much Importance as to break the Unity of the Church.

Your Doctrine is, that the *several Denominations of Christians agree in all the necessary Articles of Christianity*; and, in consequence, your *Rule of Fundamentals* will be the same as that of the *Remonstrants*, *Dogmata quæ apud omnes in confesso sunt*, Articles concerning which all Christians are agreed †. And how very few will these be? And will not this Rule put it in the Power of every perverse Man, to make that cease to be fundamental, which had always been so, till he disputed it? There is nothing so plain, especially in Religion, but what may be, and actually has been, disputed *. And therefore I question whether this Rule will leave us many more Necessaries, than were receiv'd by the ancient Pagans; and so Christianity, as to its Substance, or necessary Constituents, will be little, if any thing, more than mere natural Religion; and therefore we had been as well without it. Please then, Sir, to consider whether what follows, may not be a juster Method of settling Fundamentals.

1. As previous to the rest, 'tis necessary that we believe the Scriptures, that is, that we re-

Letter,
P. 13.

† Vid. Remonstrant. Apolog. p. 12.

* Οὐκ οἶμαι γὰρ πῶς ἔτις εὐτυχῇ γραφὴν ἠγάσῃ, ἢ μηδὲς ἀντιρεῖ· ἀλλ' ὁκείνη εὐλόγησεν νομισίον, ἢ μηδὲς εὐλόγως ἀντιρεῖ.
Clem. Alexandr. *Stromat.* Lib. 1. p. 326. *Ed. Potter.*
And thus Socinus himself confesses: "Nec Christi-
"ana fides incertis scripturis innixa est, sed ipsorum
"hominum culpa est, quo minus, ea quæ clarissime
"& constantissime scripta sunt, illi intelligant."
Socini Resp. ad Scrup.

ceive

ceive the Old and New Testament as of Divine Authority, and as our Rule of Faith and Manners. In consequence of which, we must believe the whole, as penn'd by the inspir'd Writers, to be infallibly true. We must admit no political Fiction, no pious Frauds, or Arguments merely specious; for that will destroy the Authority of the whole. And if we once depart from our Rule, that the *whole is true*, we can never know where to stop; some will be for rejecting one Part, and some another, till by degrees nothing will be left that all are agreed in. In consequence of this Belief of Scripture;

2. Whatsoever is there declared to be necessary, must for that Reason be so. Thus when we are told, that *except a Man be born of Water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God*; this will be an effectual Proof of the Necessity of *Water-Baptism*: Yet there are some who call themselves Christians, that wholly reject it.

3. Not only what the Scripture declares to be necessary in express Terms, but also what appears by plain and immediate Consequence to be inseparably connected with what is *declared* necessary, or what (if not declared necessary yet) is necessary to the main Scheme of Man's Redemption by Christ, with regard either to its *End* or *Means*. Thus the grand *End* of all is the Salvation of Mankind, and whatever destroys or evacuates that End, must be a fundamental Error. The *Means* to this End are twofold, *meritorious* and *conditional*. The *meritorious* Means is the Sacrifice of Christ: The *conditional*, Repentance from dead Works. Whoever denies either of these, or what is plainly and necessarily connected with them, errs fundamentally.

damentally — It would carry me to too great a length to shew particularly what these Doctrines are ; and you may see it well done to your hand by some excellent Authors, which I shall set down in the Notes ; * who have clearly prov'd several Doctrines to be fundamental, which, you must allow, Christians are very far from agreeing in. Can you think then, that under these material Differences *all Christians stand upon a level, united in the same common Faith, and equally Heirs of the same common Salvation ?* Or, as each Sect think themselves in the right, must not either Peace and Unity be destroy'd, or the essential Parts of Christianity (*i. e.* Christianity itself) be given up ? And in this case, I think, it can be no difficult matter to determine which should give way. † “ *Peace* in such cases must be sacrificed to “ *Truth and Charity*, that is, to the Honour of “ *God, and the eternal Interests of Mankind.* ”

Letter,
p. 28.

II. There are other Doctrines, in which a Latitude may be allow'd ; they are oppos'd in *Nature* to what we spoke of under the last Head, and may therefore be oppos'd in *Name*, and call'd *Non-fundamentals*. They are not merely *indifferent* ; (for then they would be no part of Religion) but are useful more or less, to some Persons, and under some Circumstances ; tho'

* Hoornbeck's *Socinianismus Confutatus*, Tom. 1. L. 1. c. 9.

Dr. Sherlock's *Vindication of the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet*, p. 250, &c.

Dr. Edwards's *Preservative against Socinianism*.

Dr. Waterland's *Importance of the Trinity*.

† Dr. Waterland's *Import. of the Trinity*, p. 15.

they are of less Value than the Peace and Unity of the Church, and therefore we should not divide upon them. And these are commonly Circumstantials and Appendages of Doctrines expressly reveal'd : They are either remote and obscure *Consequences* deduc'd from them, or else they relate to the *Manner* in which Things are. And these are what his Lordship declares, the the common *People* are not oblig'd to enter into; viz. because they have not Abilities to judge or determine about them. The *Doctrines* themselves may be plain and easy, when conceiv'd in that *general* way, in which they are reveal'd ; but when they are branch'd out minutely, or dress'd up with all the Furniture which speculative Men have given them, they become then no longer the Business of any, but Men of Speculation. Thus in the Article of the *Trinity*, the general Doctrine as deliver'd in Scripture is plain and intelligible, as far as 'tis *necessary* to be believ'd. But speculative Men have gone farther ; they have pursued the Doctrine in its several Consequences, and sometimes have examin'd it by the stated Rules of Philosophy, (which might be either true or false, as it happen'd) and thus have brought themselves into Difficulties, which they could not get out of consistently with the true Doctrine, and by a too great conceit of their own Abilities have run such Lengths as to make the Scripture bend and give way to philosophical Subtleties, and by departing from the simplicity of the Gospel have quite unsettled and destroy'd the true Faith, in pretending to explain and defend it. And this has made it necessary for ingenious and learned Men to oppose true Philosophy to false, to enter more minutely into several Branches of Do-

ctrines

strines than would have been otherwise necessary, to guard the right Faith by proper Distinctions and Explications, according to the Rules of *Science*: And thus Terms of Art have been introduced into the Subject, which the People are and must be Strangers to. "They
 " are of use indeed (says an excellent Writer*)
 " for settling the Controversy with greater Accuracy among Divines who understand such
 " Terms; but the Doctrine itself is clear without them, and does not want them, but stands
 " firm and unshaken, independent of them ———
 " Any plain Man may easily conceive, that Father, Son and Holy Ghost are properly divine,
 " are not one the other, and yet are one God
 " by an intimate Union; and that the Son in
 " particular being God and Man, is *one Christ*.
 " These prime Verities, and whatsoever else is
 " necessarily implied in them, may be conceiv'd
 " to be *right*, and whatsoever is contrary to
 " them, or inconsistent with them, will of consequence be *wrong*. This is enough for any
 " plain Christian to know or believe; and he is
 " not ordinarily obliged to be more minute in
 " his Inquiries, or to understand Scholastick
 " Terms."

When these sublime Articles are made the Subject of Speculation, no wonder the common People are puzzled and confounded, as they would be with a Problem in *Algebra*, or indeed about the commonest Things, if treated philosophically. Should a Plowman set himself to answer *Zeno's* Arguments against Motion, no doubt but he would be plung'd in inextricable Diffi-

* *Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Trinity.* p. 24.
 H 2 culties;

culties ; yet this would hardly persuade him that he stood still, while he was conscious of following his Plow. And I may add, that when the most acute and learned Divines venture so far out of their Depth, as to examine the *Modus* of that Distinction and Union which is in the Divine Nature, they may perplex themselves without end : which yet will be no more Reason for denying such Distinction and Union, than there is for denying the Distinction and Union of the human Soul and Body ; or for calling in Question the Truth of the *Newtonian* System, because the Principle of *Gravity* is what we can see no Possibility of explaining, or accounting for upon mechanical Principles. This Distinction may, I hope, help to lead you out of a great Mistake you have fallen into, in imputing to Dr. *Berri-man* the Opinion, that the *scholastic metaphysical Doctrine of the Trinity* is a necessary Article of Faith. The *Revealed Doctrine* is one Thing, and the *scholastic* Explication of it another ; the former is necessary, *as being the very Doctrine into which all Christians are baptiz'd* ; the latter not so, being no more than an human Comment, and not sufficiently clear to vulgar Apprehensions. But Christians are not agreed either in the one or other ; and therefore what the learned Doctor says concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity, is not necessarily to be interpreted of the *scholastic metaphysical* Explication of it. But you think it must, for this admirable Reason ; *All Christians agree in what they APPREHEND to be the Scripture-Doctrine of it.* Most certainly ; for I suppose you will scarce meet with a Man, that *believes* contrary to what he *apprehends*. To *apprehend* a Thing to be true, and to *believe* it to be true, are Propositions exactly

Letter,
p. 20.

Review,
p. 6.

ibid.
Letter,
p. 20.

exactly identical ; or if they admit of a Distinction, *believing* is in that case a necessary Consequence of *apprehending* ; which amounts to the same. And thus they that agree that the true Doctrine of the Trinity is only to be learnt from Scripture, can hardly differ in *what they Both apprehend to be the Scripture-Doctrine of it* ; for that would be to differ and agree about the same Thing : But yet, as to what is really and truly the Scripture-Doctrine, in that they may be as wide asunder as the East is from the West, or Truth from Falshood. The *Stoics* and *Epicureans* were agreed, as to what they apprehended to constitute the Nature of Virtue and Vice, *i. e.* they were agreed, that what each apprehended their Nature to consist in, that it did really consist in ; yet their Opinions were directly opposite. And thus *Athanasius*, *Arius*, and *Socinus*, were all agreed as to what they apprehended to be the Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity, *i. e.* they were agreed that the Scripture-Doctrine was the true Doctrine ; yet, as to what was really the true or Scripture-Doctrine, their Opinions were widely different.

And thus, Sir, I have given you my Thoughts concerning your *Vindication of my Lord of London*, with all that Freedom which becomes a Lover of Truth, and which the Importance of the Subject requir'd. I shall only beg leave to add, that since you have made so free with his Lordship in the Close of your Letter, as to expostulate with him upon his Conduct, to assume the Character of a Teacher and put his Lordship in mind of what he is accountable for *in that Day, when that which is done in secret shall be revealed openly*, and even to tell him with an Air of Importance, what the impartial World

Letter,
P. 45.

P. 9, 43.

World will expect from his Lordship; I hope, I may without Offence desire you to apply this Doctrine to your self, to examine your own Heart, whether your Letter to his Lordship be the Result of a sober and impartial Enquiry, in the Fear of God, in an awful Regard to the great *Tribunal* you appeal to, and with the just *Reverence* you profess to bear to the Episcopal Character, or whether you have not been influenced by some worldly Motives, some passionate Regards for Principles espoused without sufficient Examination, and adhered to for the sake of some *Political* Considerations, or Party-Attachments: Whether you are *serious* in imputing these Principles to his Lordship, and *in earnest* believe them to be his real Sentiments; and if not, whether you have been acting the Part of a good Christian, in turning these serious Things into Jest and Ridicule, and in endeavouring to lessen that Weight and Esteem which are justly due to his Lordship's *Pastoral Letters*, written in defence of the common Cause of revealed Religion, and which have done so much real Service in stemming that Tide of Infidelity, which has of late Years been breaking in upon us. And in particular let me intreat you to consider, whether you have dealt fairly in endeavouring to screen yourself under the Cover of the *Dissenters in general*, while you are pleading for such a *Latitude*, as not only the Church of *England*, but of *Scotland* also and *Geneva*, and all the Churches of the *Reformation*, and, I may add, even the best Part of the *Dissenters* here amongst us, have constantly shewn their Abhorrence of, and, 'tis to be hoped, will continue so to do. You seem to me to have taken too great a Liberty in speaking

in

Letter,
P. 7, 44.

in the Name of the whole Body of our Dissenters; and I am persuaded you can have no good Grounds for representing them as agreeing to his *Lordship's* (meaning your *own*) *Rule*. You well know, that the principal Part of them always have been, and still are, of contrary Sentiments, particularly with regard to the *received* Doctrine of the Trinity, and several other Articles of as great Importance, which you are for excluding the List of Fundamentals.* These are Points which it greatly concerns you to weigh attentively and impartially; and if you do so, there will be no doubt but it will have its proper Effect; which is the hearty and sincere Desire of,

S I R,

Your Humble Servant,

Tho. Johnson.

* See Mr. *Eveleigh's* *Deity of Christ* proved *fundamental*, and several other Pieces refer'd to in Dr. *Waterland's Importance of the Trinity*, p. 1, 7. As also *The Doctrine of the Trinity defended*, by four *London Ministers*.

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